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EXPERIENCES OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS INTEGRATING STUDENTS WITH MODERATE AND SEVERE DISABILITIES

BY

LILLIAN ANN JANZEN

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

IN

SPECIAL EDUCATION - SEVERE DISABILITIES

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1994

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Experiences of classroom teachers integrating students with moderate and severe disabilities submitted by Lillian Ann JANZEN in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Education in Severe Disabilities.

L. Wilgosh, Thesis Co-Supervisor

L. McDonald, Thesis Co-Supervisor

F. Snart

R. L. Ware

Date: Sept. 30, 1994

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my parents, William and Katherine Janzen who have encouraged me in all my endeavours.

Abstract

This study was designed to investigate the experiences of regular elementary teachers who have integrated students with severe and moderate disabilities into their classrooms. Using a semi-structured interview format, six teachers were interviewed about their experiences. Five of the teachers were regular classroom teachers. The final co-researcher was a resource room teacher. This last teacher was responsible for six students with special needs, integrating them into age-appropriate classrooms. A written summary was sent to each teacher to confirm the information given in the initial interview. Interviews were transcribed and analysis of the transcripts followed using categorical coding and theme development.

The following themes emerged during the data analysis: student behaviour, instructional program, classroom organization, student skills, peer relationships, teacher feelings and beliefs, support concerns, teacher assistants, parental concerns and future considerations.

Description of the themes also included co-researcher quotes and a comparison of comments made by classroom teachers as compared to that of the resource room teacher. A comparison to current literature, as well as a discussion of the implications of the research were covered within this study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the teachers that participated in this study. In doing so, they made this research possible. Their willingness to give of their time during a busy school season was much appreciated.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis is an exploration of the experiences of six classroom teachers integrating students with moderate and severe disabilities in an urban western Canadian city. The purpose of the study was to discover the concerns, issues and highlights of the integration process for elementary teachers. This study will describe the results of semi-structured interviews that took place in May and June of 1994. A qualitative methodology was chosen because it could best describe the experiences of the teachers.

Background to Problem

This study grows out of a concern that classroom teachers have been left out of the discussion regarding the integration of children with disabilities into regular classrooms, although they are the ones who invest the most time in the process. As a teacher, I have been involved in discussions of the concerns, fears and disagreements teachers have with integration. With recent cutbacks to school budgets teachers are facing increased classroom sizes with fewer and fewer supports available to them. Teachers are concerned about their ability to meet the demands placed upon them within the regular classroom.

Increasingly, it seems, parents of children with mental disabilities are requesting that their children be placed within regular classrooms.

School boards are willing to accommodate parental wishes for their children. Teachers are then asked to provide a classroom program for this particular child. Teachers are concerned about their lack of knowledge and experience working with students with disabilities. When students have physical or health concerns, teachers are often overwhelmed by the physical management of students. Lack of information can result in teacher fear and panic, as in some of the stories that have been related to me.

However, I have also seen examples of integration working to everyone's benefit. Teachers that were allowed to become familiar with students with disabilities are often more amenable to having these same students in their classroom. When teachers are informed of the supports available to them, fears have often been minimized.

Unfortunately, the teachers who are actually working with students with disabilities in their classrooms are not often involved in discussions on integration. Often the examples of integration discussed within schools represent the "worst case scenario". They tend to be based on hearsay or conjecture rather than fact. Hopefully, this study will provide information for teachers that will allow them to make more knowledgeable statements about integration.

Significance of Problem

The current emphasis on integration, the Regular Education Initiative, and Public Law 94-142 in the United States have brought the philosophy of integration to the forefront in Canada. Although the

process and philosophy of integrating students with disabilities is not new, some of the initiatives such as placement of students in age-appropriate, regular education classes have resulted in new challenges for the regular education teacher.

Studies have been done on teacher attitudes towards integration and students with special needs (e.g., Semmel et. al., l991), but little research has pertained to the concerns and issues regular education teachers face on a daily basis as they integrate students with special needs into their classrooms. The research available has had differing results. Some studies indicated that teachers are generally positive (e.g., McDonald, Birnbrauer, & Swerissen, 1987; Martlew, & Hodson, 1991). Some studies indicated that teachers had concerns about the integration process (e.g., Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991; Whinnery, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1991). Support services, experience with students with disabilities and course work in special education often positively influenced teacher attitudes (McDonald et.al., 1987; Myles, & Simpson, 1989). Little research exists concerning regular education teachers' experiences and attitudes after they have integrated students with severe disabilities.

In recent years a few descriptive studies of teacher experiences have been published (Colozzi, Coleman-Kennedy, & Fay, 1986; Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Saint-Laurent, & Lessard, 1991). Most of the literature deals with students with mild disabilities. However, lobby groups, parent groups and the research seem to be calling for students with more severe disabilities to

be placed in regular classrooms (Sailor, Gee, Goetz, & Graham, 1988; Stainback, & Stainback, 1989). Again, classroom teacher views have not been solicited.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of six teachers who had integrated students with moderate to severe disabilities into their elementary classrooms. Interviews of the teachers provided the data for the analysis. Themes that emerged from the analysis were to provide information about the integration process. The proposed research should contribute to the existing knowledge in the following areas:

1) identifying needs and issues that have been experienced by classroom teachers integrating students with severe and moderate disabilities;

2) providing information to teacher groups and administration that would enhance planning for integration through dissemination of the results;

3) contributing to the existing literature in the area of integration of students with severe and moderate disabilities into regular classrooms.

Overview of Thesis

This thesis will begin with a review of the literature about integration. The research, in general, about integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms will be discussed, followed by the

results from studies of teachers' attitudes about integration. Further discussion will include research that investigates the actual experiences of teachers who have integrated students into their classrooms.

The methodology of the study will be discussed in Chapter 3. That chapter will include a description of the co-researchers in the study, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4 will describe the results of the study. It will summarize and compare the information given during the co-researcher interviews.

Finally, the fifth chapter will draw conclusions from the data analysis. It will contrast the information discovered to that already published. This last chapter will also include a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Key Terms

For purposes of this study, the following terms are defined.

Co-researcher: This term was used to describe the teachers that were interviewed for this study (Pocklinghorne, 1983). Since the teachers were the primary sources for the study, the researcher preferred the term co-researcher over that of subject.

Inclusion: is the term used within recent literature that expands on integration. It includes the characteristics of a philosophy of fair and equal treatment for all students, individually adapted curriculum,

service and support within the classroom, and the building of natural support systems within the classroom (Stainback, Stainback, & Jackson, 1990).

Integration: is the process of placing students with disabilities into regular education classrooms of their age-appropriate peers (Alper, & Ryndak, 1992; McDonnell, & Hardman, 1989). The term "integration" was used within this paper rather than the term "inclusion", because, it is the term used most commonly within classrooms around Alberta. Integration may or may not include all the characteristics that are involved in inclusive classrooms.

Moderate disabilities: Students with moderate disabilities were defined as students having a cognitive delay of 1/2 to 1/3 of that expected for chronological age often accompanied with social and behavioural delay (Alberta Education Response Centre, 1992). For the purpose of this study, students were so identified by their classroom teachers.

Severe disabilities: Students with severe disabilities were defined as students having at least two impairments which cause a severe loss of functioning (Sailor et. al., 1988). For the purpose of this study, students were so identified by their teache

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature on integration of students with disabilities is extensive. In the last decade the debate on integration has expanded from students with mild disabilities being included in the general classroom to students with moderate/severe disabilities being included in the general classroom. For the purpose of this study, the literature will be reviewed for students with moderate and severe disabilities and how they have been included within the general classroom. In light of the vast amount of literature regarding integration in general, the researcher proposes to limit the review of the literature to the period beginning with the discussion of the Regular Education Initiative (beginning in the mid 1980s). In this way, the recent trends and studies can be given greater attention. Four areas of review are covered: integration of students with disabilities, inclusion literature about classroom teachers, regular education teacher attitudes towards integration, and teacher experiences with integration.

Integration of Students with Disabilities

The Regular Education Initiative in the United States proposed the merger of special education and regular education. It suggested that the general education system should have responsibility for all students, including those identified as having special needs (Davis, 1989).

In 1986, Will, Assistant Secretary for the Practice of Special

Education and Rehabilitative Services, U.S. Department of Education, called for a change in the present educational services. She recommended combining special education and regular education into a cohesive partnership. Stainback and Stainback (1984, 1990) also called for this merger of the education system which would meet individual student needs, strengthen professional relationships, and maximize funds.

Within Canada, data from Saskatchewan showed that students with moderate and severe disabilities were moving significantly towards receiving instruction in regular classrooms and receiving less instruction in special schools (Sanche & Dahl, 1991). In Manitoba, the Ministry of Education in 1989 released guidelines for the education of students with special needs into the regular school system (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991). All provinces except British Columbia and Prince Edward Island have mandatory legislation for the education of exceptional children (Goguen, 1989). British Columbia has detailed guidelines for the education of students with special needs.

In 1988, Alberta gave the right of access to education for all students (Conn-Blowers & Mcleod, 1989). The Yellowhead School Division was the first school district within Alberta to adopt a policy of full integration into regular classrooms for students with disabilities (Alberta Education Response Centre, 1991). Flexible models of integration allowed schools to consider individual needs for students.

The issue of integration within Alberta schools has resulted in a volatile and often emotional debate within the teaching profession.

Issues and concerns relating to integration were included in Trying to Teach, a publication of the Alberta Teachers Association (1993). A compilation of comments reflected the concerns of many teachers within Alberta. Integration of students within classrooms was a deep concern. Written comments by teachers included questions about the implementation of integration, the philosophy of integration, and the need for support. The Special Education Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association concludes in Trying to Teach (1993),

> ...integration is not appropriate for all children with special needs... Successful integration depends upon factors such as an understanding of the process, sufficient preparation time, training of educators, students and parents, effective service delivery and ongoing evaluation (p. 8).

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms provides a legal recourse to obtain an education for children with disabilities. Inter-provincial differences of educational policies are minimized by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 15 of the Constitutions Act, 1982, states that: "Every individual is equal before and under the law, and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and in particular, without discrimination based on....mental and physical disability" (p. 1).

In recent years, more and more educators have shifted from the term "integration" to that of "inclusive classrooms". Inclusive classrooms are described by Stainback, Stainback, and Jackson (1990) as having the following characteristics: a philosophy that all

children belong and can learn in the regular school and classroom; classroom rules that reflect fair and equal treatment and respect for all students; curriculum that is adapted for each child; services and supports available within the classroom; building of natural supports within the classroom, such as friendship circles, cooperative learning and buddy systems; classroom accommodation to benefit the entire classroom; empowerment from teacher to students so that students can problem solve, support and make their own decisions; promotion of the understanding of individual differences; and flexibility. The authors then go on to discuss ways in which these characteristics can be implemented within the school. Additional literature to support inclusive education includes the writings of Thousand and Villa, (1989), Stainback, Stainback, and Forest (1989), and Vandercook and York, (1990). Sailor (1991) discusses two reforms taking place in special education. The first is the call to integrate students with severe disabilities into regular classrooms. The second reform is to keep students with mild and moderate disabilities in regular classrooms rather than pull-out programs.

Literature about integration of students with mild disabilities. The advantages and disadvantages of integration for students with mild disabilities are discussed in much of the literature (Baudot, 1986). Some benefits are suggested to be: a superior learning environment; normal peer relationships that model appropriate language, play and behaviours; social skill improvement; improved personal worth; ability

to make relationships and development of a value system (Hellier, 1988).

In a review of the literature, Wang and Baker (1985) found empirical support for mainstreaming including improved self concept, academic performance, changes in attitudes of non handicapped peers, teachers and parents, and increased interactions among teachers and students. Wang and Baker expressed a need for further studies that focus on programming factors and their effects on mainstreamed special education students. But they also recommended that there were enough reasons to promote the active inclusion of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms.

In Britain, Martlew and Hodson (1991) compared students with mild disabilities in both an integrated, and in a special school. They investigated behaviours of students, teasing by peers and teachers' attitudes. The researchers found that there wasn't significantly strong support for the benefits of integration but also there wasn't a negative effect. They did not find a significant difference in teasing, bullying or inappropriate behaviours with either group of students. Self-reports of students indicated that students with mild disabilities did not have as much contact with friends outside of the school as did their school peers (e.g., going to a birthday party or to a friend's home to play).

Much of the literature is concerned with different instructional techniques that can be used for students with mild disabilities within the regular classroom (Anderson-Inman, 1987; Stainback, Stainback, & Jackson, 1990; Whinnery, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 1991). Peer tutoring and

cooperative learning techniques, and social skills training have also been investigated within the regular classroom.

The Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM) (Wang & Birch, 1984) has been used effectively with students with mild disabilities and in conjunction with the Regular Education Initiative. It includes curricular and instructional modifications that support students with mild disabilities within the regular classroom. Giangreco and Putnam (1991) suggested that ALEM has the potential to provide an alternative to traditional instructional options for classroom teachers. ALEM encourages the delabelling of students, a diagnostic-prescriptive monitoring system, individualized assistance to all students and teaching students self-management skills. Use of the ALEM model has demonstrated gains in reading, math and social competence. Students have also improved in their general self-esteem and their confidence in their own cognitive competence (Larrivee, 1989). The ALEM model has not been extended to students with severe disabilities.

Anderson-Inman (1987) investigated how differences in setting and curriculum materials affected academic performance for five students with mild disabilities. Arithmetic skills that had been mastered in resource rooms were tested within the regular classroom. Setting was found to have little effect on student performance. However, variables such as the way tests were administered, the type of curriculum questions, recency and transfer of skill instruction may all have affected student performance. Although the students did not perform as well within the regular classroom, Anderson-Inman suggested that the

disabilities from their discussion. Recently, more of the literature has included students with severe disabilities (Forest & Lusthaus, 1989; Jenkins, Pious, & Jewell,1990; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Miller, 1990; Stainback & Stainback , 1989).

Vermont, Iowa, Colorado and California are now promoting full inclusion for all students (Sailor, 1991). In Canada, New Brunswick and Ontario are strong examples for full inclusion education (Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989; Vandercook, York, & Forest, 1989). In an overview of the literature concerning American schools, Saint-Laurent and Lessard (1991) discovered that integration for students with moderate to severe disabilities generally referred to their integration into special education classrooms within regular schools. In recent years the impetus for full inclusion has reached Alberta, and more and more school districts are integrating students with severe disabilities into regular classrooms (Conn-Blowers & Mcleod, 1989).

Brown, Schwarz, Udvari-Solner, Kampschroer, Johnson, Jorgensen, and Gruenewald (1991) compared the advantages and disadvantages of full integration and integration options where students could receive instruction in several environments. The authors suggested a balance between the two extreme options touted by educators. Examples of how students could be based in regular classrooms but not confined to those same classrooms were given within the article. Factors that needed to be considered when placing students with severe disabilities into regular classrooms were also investigated. Some of those factors were chronological age, related

services, personnel, the environments in which a student functioned, priorities of parents and students, acquisition of functional skills and post-school life. Brown et al. emphasised that students needed to be members of classrooms but also needed to be learning for the future.

Giangreco and Putnam (1991) overviewed the literature and suggested ways in which students with severe disabilities could be integrated into classrooms and still receive solid instruction. They reviewed curriculum overlapping techniques, adaptive instruction and multilevel curriculum selection. They indicated that adaptive instructional programs used for students with mild disabilities had resulted in higher achievement levels than traditional instructional techniques.

Friendships and increased social interactions of students with severe disabilities have been investigated in the research. Johnson and Johnson (1989) discussed ways in which to encourage peer interaction for students with severe disabilities. They promoted structured interactions that would reduce the negative effects of paternalism, ambivalent feelings and interaction strain that could occur if student interactions were not well defined. Hamre-Nietupski, Hendrickson, Nieutupski and Sasso (1993) explored teacher perceptions regarding friendships for students with severe disabilities. Teachers advocated peer tutoring, cooperative learning and social interaction skills instruction to be used with student groups to facilitate friendships among students with and without disabilities.

The research about students with moderate to severe disabilities

above variables might have affected students' performance.

Coleman, Pullis, and Minnett (1987) reviewed the literature about students with mild disabilities and their adjustment to mainstreaming. The writers limited their review to examples of reviews or studies that represented findings in academic performance, social status and self-esteem. They concluded that the literature did not confirm that students with mild disabilities demonstrated any gains in the above areas when they were mainstreamed into regular classrooms.

In a similar study, Kauffman and Pullen (1989) concluded that research did not support or reject any one educational setting or method for all students with mild disabilities. They also stated that some of the conclusions within the studies went beyond the parameters of the data.

Literature does not seem to establish benefits for students with mild disabilities in integrated settings. Although the general feeling is that students will benefit from regular class placement, there are very few published articles that provide support for this view. However, none of the literature establishes a negative effect for students when integrated into regular classrooms.

Students with moderate/ severe disabilities integrated into the regular classroom. Students addressed by the Regular Education Initiative included students with mild handicaps, learning disabilities and behaviour disorders, but not students with severe disabilities. For example, Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1987), strong proponents of the Regular Education Initiative, excluded students with severe

integrated into regular classrooms has indicated that the majority of students have been included in regular classrooms for a portion of their school time. Research has reviewed methods of instruction in the classroom, techniques to promote peer interaction and curriculum methods for integrating students with disabilities. Some of the research has indicated that placement for students was dependent upon individual student needs. Students should be considered individually whereas research is often limited to discussion of categorical groupings of students.

Inclusion Literature About Classroom Teachers

There is a substantial amount of literature regarding how teachers can implement full inclusion within their classrooms. The literature includes a discussion of the needs of classroom teachers and strategies for collaborative teaching.

Miller (1990) discussed the implications for regular classroom teachers in her review of the Regular Education Initiative. Adequate support for teachers, such as staff training and classroom implementation strategies, must be made available to teachers, she stated. Miller stressed that teachers needed to be actively involved in the process of integration. Finally, she called for open communication between special educators and regular educators. This open communication should include opportunities for observation of teachers, practising new methodologies and active, mutual problem solving. Giangreco and Putnam (1991) also stressed that the teacher

needed to take responsibility for the instruction within the classroom.

Some of the literature about the Regular Education Initiative has covered implications for regular classroom teachers who have students with severe disabilities in their classroom (Jenkins, Pious, & Jewell, 1990; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989 ; Snell, 1991; Stainback & Stainback, 1984, 1989). Jenkins et al., (1990) called for sufficient support personnel and material resources to adequately meet the needs of students with severe disabilities. They also argued that classroom teachers should not be held responsible for teaching all skills, such as Braille, mobility training, or discrimination training. Kauffman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988) expressed similar concerns about demands that would be placed upon the classroom teacher, such as time constraints, parental requests, and community and administrative demands. Davis (1989) felt that teachers had been left out of the discourse on the Regular Education Initiative.

Snell (1991) provided a description of model integration programs for students with severe disabilities. The writer also highlighted some of the strategies that have worked to make the programs successful. Team planning amongst administrators, parents, and teachers was identified as an essential ingredient for successful programs.

Thousand and Villa (1989) examined some of the critical elements for team teaching. The authors drew upon the experiences of school districts that were successfully educating all students in their neighbourhood schools. Team teaching was an important aspect of heterogeneous schooling that promoted successful school learning for

all students. The discussion included approaches that teachers used to create opportunities for collaborative teams. Thousand and Villa examined the need for common language, knowledge and philosophical bases among school personnel. Teachers needed to use interpersonal skills effectively within the group to achieve their goals. A belief base that diversity is possible and beneficial for all students was essential for collaborative team planning. Further, teachers needed to embrace collaborative team work and parents as equal partners in education. Thousand and Villa did not differentiate between students with or without disabilities. They were adamant in their belief that all students should be educated in their neighbourhood schools. Using successful examples of this belief reinforced their words.

A study by Colozzi, Coleman-Kennedy, and Fay (1986) attempted to demonstrate empirically that team teaching would work while integrating students. The special education teacher and classroom teacher of a student with moderate disabilities carried out a behaviour program for disruptive vocalisations in the regular classroom. The positive results seemed to indicate that this close collaboration between teachers was a strong reason for success.

Wang (1989) provided more information on adaptive instruction models. She examined the need for coordination among classroom teachers and resource personnel. She saw the classroom teacher as the central figure in the teaching process, receiving support from resource personnel as needed.

Stainback, Stainback, and Slavin (1989) presented some organizational strategies for classrooms. Guidelines for personnel, and student ratios in classrooms were included. Suggestions were furnished for accessing support networks and ways to encourage acceptance of differences among students. The writers also provided strategies to develop curriculum, instruction and assessment practices. Stainback et al. also provided an outline for physically organising materials and equipment. The authors concluded that to fully meet the needs of all students, teachers needed to use the best instructional practices available rather than placing students in classes without any teacher effort.

The literature surrounding the Regular Education Initiative specific to students with severe disabilities has emphasised the need for communication between special education and regular education personnel. Supports must also be made available to classroom teachers. Students with severe disabilities will be best served when all the personnel involved in their education work together as a team. Limited research has found that this collaborative teaching can be used effectively.

Additional literature has provided specific examples, strategies and techniques to facilitate integration into the regular classroom. Teachers have a wealth of practical information at their disposal for use within their classrooms. Although attitudes towards integration seem to be favourable, there are some hindrances to facilitating integration as found in attitudinal studies.

Regular Education Teachers' Attitudes Towards Integration

Surveys and questionnaires that have investigated teacher attitudes towards students with disabilities have discovered that attitudes are generally positive (Duquette & O'Reilly, 1988; Gans, 1987; Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989; Hanrahan & Rapagna, 1987; Munson, 1987; Sanche & Dahl, 1991; Semmel et. al., 1991; Williams, Fox, Thousand, & Fox, 1990; Winzer, 1987). Winzer (1987) surveyed attitudes toward the philosophy of integration, finding attitudes to be generally positive. Hanrahan and Rapagna (1987) surveyed teachers of kindergarten to grade two classrooms and found that 66% of teachers surveyed would be willing to accept students with mental handicaps into their classrooms. They also found that teachers with some training in special education seemed to be more positive towards mainstreaming than teachers with no previous special education training.

A survey by the Ministry of Education in Manitoba (Rampaul & Freeze,1991) indicated that teachers believed integration had positive outcomes for both regular and special need students, particularly in the affective area. However, Rampaul and Freeze (1991) also reported that teachers were not as positive about the effects of integration when it came to cognitive development of students. The following concerns were raised by teachers: (a) regular students did not receive as much attention within an integrated classroom, (b) behaviour by special needs students often affected the learning of regular students, and (c)

increased preparation for students with special needs resulted in inadequate preparation for the remaining students. Teachers suggested that they would benefit from preparation time, consultative services, resource materials, inservice training and emotional support.

Teacher attitudes towards students with mental disabilities were explored in Australia (McDonald, Birnbrauer, & Swerissen, 1987). The researchers compared the attitudes of teachers with and without experience in integrating students. It was found that all teachers had generally positive attitudes towards integration. However, those teachers that had more direct experience with integration were more positive in their attitudes. This study also investigated children's perceptions and attitudes. Students that had peers with disabilities in their classrooms were more positive in their attitudes towards integration. They felt that children with disabilities should be educated in the regular classroom.

Semmel et. al., (1991) surveyed teachers regarding their attitudes towards integrating students with mild handicaps. They found that the teachers did not perceive themselves as having the skills to adapt instruction. The teachers also felt that the regular education program did not adequately address the instructional needs of the students. Although teachers expressed these concerns, they were generally positive towards integration. Teachers accepted responsibility for the student with mild handicaps in their classroom.

Within the study by Martlew and Hodson (1991), special education and mainstream teachers attitudes tended to differ. Both sets of

teachers felt that their present placement in special education or mainstream education classes was the best environment for students with mild disabilities. Teachers in the mainstream school felt that students with disabilities improved in their social skills and behaviour, and were involved in play with other students. Teachers in the spècial school were concerned about teasing and also the financial constraints of integration. Many of the teachers in the special schools were hesitant in wholeheartedly accepting the philosophy of integration.

The need for the regular education teacher's active collaboration in the integration process was discussed by Myles and Simpson (1989). While investigating teachers' willingness to integrate students with mild disabilities, they found that involvement in the planning and implementation of integration was a strong factor in facilitating integration. Teachers suggested that smaller class sizes and support services such as paraprofessional assistance aided effective mainstreaming. Myles and Simpson also found that teachers valued information on behaviour management and instructional techniques more than collaborative teaching support.

Duquette and O'Reilly (1989) also surveyed teachers who had some experience integrating students with disabilities. They did not include the gifted in their definition of the special needs population. They found that teachers were generally positive in their attitudes towards integration. The behaviour of school principals was related to teacher attitudes. When principals were supportive of integration, teachers also tended to be more supportive.

When reviewing teachers' acceptance of behavioural and instructional techniques for students with mild disabilities, Whinnery et. al., (1991) also had teachers rate current mainstreaming practices. They used special education, remedial, and general education teachers as participants. This study found that general educators were not as confident as the other two groups in their own ability to teach students with mild disabilities. The authors debated the possibility that teachers could be more hesitant about mainstreaming than they report being.

Savage and Wienke (1989) obtained conflicting results in their survey. They found that secondary teachers were generally negative in their attitudes towards integrating students with disabilities. However, increased contact with special education teachers increased the probability of teachers becoming more positive towards integration.

Ammer (1984) investigated the experiences of teachers integrating students with handicaps into their classrooms and teachers' involvement in the IEP process. Seventy percent of the teachers had very negative reactions towards the IEP process and integration. When these negative reactions were investigated, Ammer found that the process of integration was the problem and that most of these teachers were not refusing to admit students with disabilities into their classrooms. Ammer identified three factors that influenced attitudes towards integration. These factors were: (a) previous courses in special education, (b) grade level taught, and (c) communication between special and regular educators. Elementary teachers were

more involved in the planning and implementation of the education for students with special needs than were secondary teachers. Better communication among the two groups of educators was strongly encouraged.

Hellier (1988) surveyed educators involved in integrating students with disabilities in Scotland. Nineteen staff members, ranging from the nurse to the headmaster from six primary schools were asked to respond to a questionnaire. They were asked their perceptions of the integration experience for students, classroom management and their own professional experience. They were also asked to describe their perceived needs. Seventy-four percent of the respondents were directly involved in teaching students with special needs. The outcome as found by the researchers was highly positive. Benefits for students with disabilities were: (a) a superior learning environment, (b) normal peer relationships that modelled appropriate language, play and behaviours, (c) social skill improvement, (d) improved personal worth, (e) ability to make relationships, and (f) development of a value system. They also listed benefits for students without disabilities as an increased awareness and acceptance of differences among people and in some instances an increased unselfishness and self-confidence. Some of the respondents, however, felt that students with severe disabilities were less likely to benefit from integrated classrooms but all respondents were consistent in their belief that the regular classroom was the best placement for students with mild to moderate disabilities. Teachers also identified some of their own needs. They cited needs for

time management, extra personnel and cohesive plans and policy establishment by school and districts to offset some of the difficulties. Extra personnel and collaborative teams were given credit for making integration positive.

Williams, Fox, Thousand, and Fox (1990) reviewed perceptions of best educational practice by teachers, administrators, and parents of students with severe disabilities. Ninety-two percent of the general education teachers felt that local school placement was the best educational practice for these students. However, when asked about placement in the regular classroom, only 58% of these teachers felt that this would be the best educational practice.

These studies suggest that teachers are somewhat ambivalent to having students with special needs in their classrooms. Although teachers tend to be positive towards the philosophy of integration, the process of integration presents more of a problem. The process of integration needs much work and communication with all education personnel. The management of extra personnel, establishment of policies, increased training for regular educators and the simplification of IEPs were strong themes in the research.

Attitude surveys and questionnaires reported in the literature do not seem to indicate much difference between the varying degrees of disability. Much of the literature has not differentiated between the teacher with or without experience in integrating students with disabilities. Factors that were found to facilitate integration were: (a) collaborative teaching, (b) principal support, (c) previous experience

with students with disabilities, (d) course work in special education, (e) reduction of paperwork, (f) consultative support, and (g) preparation time.

The surveys and questionnaires used a broad base of teachers from a variety of backgrounds to explore their questions. Although this established a general set of attitudes of teachers it did not allow for the fact that experience in integration may effect attitudes towards integration. The following section reviews the literature on teachers who have integrated students with disabilities.

Teacher Experiences Integrating Students With Disabilities

Although literature listing the benefits of integration for students with severe disabilities is available (e.g., Alper & Ryndak, 1992; Sailor et. al., 1988; Pivato, 1986), literature about actual experiences of teachers integrating students with disabilities have been limited. Studies of the experiences of teachers having integrated students with severe disabilities are even more limited.

In Quebec the range of options for students with moderate disabilities covers the spectrum from segregated schools to integration into regular schools. An ongoing study in Quebec has examined 31 students with moderate disabilities in three types of classrooms (Saint-Laurent, & Lessard, 1991). The researchers found that there was no difference in the academic, language or behaviour assessments used with the three groups of students. However, in the subjective reports of teachers, general education teachers reported that students with

disabilities did show behavioural progress.

Eichenger and Downing (1992) investigated teacher perceptions of program quality for students with severe disabilities, comparing results to a 1987 study. Eighty-nine teachers and administrators, with at least two years of experience with students with severe disabilities, from six different states participated in the study. Teachers were also teaching in an integrated classroom, using age appropriate, functional and community-based instruction techniques. Although the survey was primarily concerned with instructional techniques, the researchers found that some respondents felt that students with severe disabilities should be included in regular classrooms with their peers. Respondents had included these suggestions in their anecdotal comments. The researchers recommended that a question about the education of students with severe disabilities be included in their next study.

York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, and Caughey (1992) investigated the integration experiences of school personnel and classmates of 24 students with severe disabilities. Subjects were given open-ended questionnaire items relating to the integration of the students. The findings of the questionnaires were generally positive, with students and teachers overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the integration experience. Recommendations from the regular classroom teachers included the need for ongoing communication between the special educators and regular educators, and the recommendation that integration continue. Teachers also suggested that initial efforts to

integrate students should be with willing teachers.

Hamre-Nieutupski, Nietupski, Ayres, Savage, Mitchell, and Bramman (1989), used curricular infusion to enhance the integration of students with severe disabilities. Curricular infusion was the process of including disability-related information and activities into the curriculum at appropriate points, to promote understanding of persons with disabilities. These activities included practical applications involving students with disabilities who were in the school. For example, one assignment asked students to investigate the schools' wheelchair accessibility. Initial concerns of the regular educators towards integration were transformed over the year. These teachers developed positive views towards the method of curricular infusion and took leadership in implementation the following year.

The Utah Elementary Integration Model was described by McDonnell, McDonnell, Hardman, and McCune (1991). Students with severe disabilities were integrated for part of the day into general education classrooms. These classroom teachers were very supportive of part-time integration of students and wished it to continue. Again, teachers felt that the ongoing input of special education personnel provided the necessary support for ensuring success.

Experiences of classroom teachers integrating students with severe disabilities were studied in Vermont by Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993). Through semi-structured interviews, 19 teachers provided information on their experiences. Initially, teachers were hesitant about accepting the students. They

often requested that they receive additional support. They also began with the understanding that their classroom was not necessarily a permanent placement for the student with disabilities. As the year progressed, 17 teachers reported increasing their own involvement and ownership in the students' educational programs. The researchers referred to these experiences as a "transformation" (Giangreco et al., 1993, p. 364). The teachers transformed their own attitudes and actions towards students. Two of the teachers did not report any change in their attitudes, but they also reported no ownership of the students' education within their classroom. Directly working with students seemed to affect attitudes. An important consideration for teachers was teamwork with support and resource personnel.

Studies of the experiences of teachers integrating students with severe disabilities seem to indicate that teachers become more positive as they become more involved with students. These positive experiences seem to be enhanced when special education teachers and support personnel work closely with regular educators in a collaborative relationship. This collaborative team process has recently been included in literature about inclusive schooling. As seen previously, the methods and suggestions are practical and detailed. Teachers and schools willing to practice inclusive schooling have many written resources available (Rainforth, York, & MacDonald, 1992; Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989).

This chapter has reviewed the literature background on integration of students with disabilities. It has included a discussion of integration

for students with mild to severe disabilities. Teacher attitudes towards integration were also reviewed. The final section included literature that described actual experiences of teachers integrating students with moderate to severe disabilities in their classrooms. The following chapter will describe the methodology used in this thesis research study.

Chapter 3

Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a rationale for the use of qualitative research. A description of the method of collection and analysis of the data is also provided.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is often called ethnographic, naturalistic, or participant-observer research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The researcher is primarily concerned with understanding a phenomenon from the subject's viewpoint. The description of the phenomenon rather than an answer to a set of questions is the goal of qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that qualitative research is "...rich in description...but not easily handled by statistical procedures" (p. 2).

Qualitative research is concerned with the natural setting and the context in which behaviours occur. Researchers attempt to carry out research within that setting. Qualitative research is descriptive. Data collection methods used include naturalistic observation, recording of what happens in the field through school records, audiotapes, videotapes, and also reporting of results through interviews or detailed descriptions (Stainback & Stainback, 1989b).

Qualitative research is concerned with process rather than

outcomes. Data are analysed inductively (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Hypotheses are not proven or disproven; rather the theory develops from the "bottom up". Glaser and Strauss (1967) call this grounded theory.

Finally, discovering the meaning of the experience is the goal of qualitative research. It is essential to understand the experience as it relates to the people and their interactions with this experience.

Analysis of the research involves the search for meaning found in the patterns and units of information. Analysis is often ongoing throughout the data collection process. Researchers are searching for the meaning and focusing on the information that they may need to further investigate. Analysis includes the use of theoretical and substantive questioning. Substantive questioning is concerned with the actual events and people involved. Theoretical questioning becomes a part of the analysis as the researcher questions how the actual research relates to theory. As the researcher codes and places information into meaning units, the theory emerges from the data (Glaser & Strauss,1967).

Qualitative research has been chosen for this thesis because the goal of this research is to describe the experiences of the classroom teachers integrating students with disabilities. To more fully understand the teacher experience, the interview method allows the researcher the opportunity to explore the information provided by the teacher. The interviewer is able to question and discover more detailed information from an interview as compared to a survey or questionnaire.

A discussion of the specific research methods used will now be described.

Research Procedures

Co-researcher selection procedure. In March of 1994, permission was secured from the participating school board to approach principals of elementary schools. Names of schools and possible participants were provided by a special education consultant within the school district. Children with severe disabilities were defined as students having at least two impairments which cause a severe loss of functioning (Sailor et. al., 1988). Integrated students with severe disabilities were to be spending at least 50 % of instructional time in the regular classrooms of the selected teachers. Initially, it was planned that teachers would have at least two years of experience integrating students with disabilities.

Principals of five schools were telephoned after they received a copy of the study purpose. All principals except one were willing to approach teachers on behalf of the researcher. Principals then phoned back or the researcher phoned them to access names of teachers who were willing to be contacted. In several of the schools, teachers were not willing to participate. Principals listed several reasons, e.g., busy time of year, teacher contract talks, governmental cutbacks resulting in low morale. At that point two interviews were scheduled. Three other interviews scheduled by the principals were subsequently cancelled.

I contacted the school board again and was given five more school names. This required increasing the range of student ability from

students with severe disabilities to students with moderate disabilities. From these five schools, four more interviews were scheduled. One additional teacher cancelled her interview and another teacher was found to interview.

Co-researcher descriptions. Six teachers were interviewed from four different elementary schools within a school district in an urban, western Canadian city. Schools were in both northern and southern areas of the city, as well as from a variety of socioeconomic strata.

Five of the classrooms were regular classrooms ranging from grades one to four. One classroom was a resource classroom for seven regular students and six special needs students, grades one to three. The regular students were from a Grade One classroom. They spent the first hour in the resource room, along with the students with special needs. After this initial hour, the regular students returned to the Grade One classroom. The remaining special needs students were individually integrated into the regular classrooms throughout the day.

Teacher experience ranged from three years of teaching experience to 24 years of teaching experience. Two teachers had no previous experience integrating students with disabilities. One teacher had four months experience. The remaining three teachers had between seven and ten years of experience with integration. Four teachers had university course work in special education. One teacher had two overview classes: two teachers had a minor in special education in their undergraduate degrees. One teacher had a post-graduate degree in special education. The remaining three teachers

had all had some inservice workshops provided through their school board.

One teacher requested that her teacher assistant be included in the interview. The assistant was asked to respond to the questions as she felt comfortable. Her comments were included within the transcript of the interview. The assistant was given an interview summary and was asked to verify its accuracy. Comments made by the assistant followed along with those of the teacher. The researcher decided that since comments made by the assistant were not unique, the assistant's comments were not included within this study.

Four of the teachers had students who fell into the initial category of severe disabilities. The remaining two teachers had students who were identified as having moderate disabilities within the school district. The range of student abilities was diverse within this group. Three students had physical disabilities, two students had visual disabilities, all had cognitive and language delays. One student had Down syndrome.

To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, names of the participants, their students, schools and the gender of students and teachers have been randomly changed by the researcher.

Interview procedures. All co-researchers were contacted by phone. The purpose of the study was explained over the phone. They were also assured that their anonymity would be maintained. Co-researchers were also asked if they would mind being audio taped. It was explained to them that the audiotape would be erased upon completion of the study.

Each co-researcher was interviewed once. An interview time was set at each person's convenience. Two individual interviews took place in the morning before school began. The other four interviews took place after school. Five of the interviews took place in the classroom: the last took place in a private school office.

At the beginning of each interview, the researcher took time to establish some rapport, usually commenting on the classroom and the school. All teachers were very warm and welcoming. The interview time also began with a review of the purpose of the study and the signing of the consent form by the participants. Each co-researcher was given the names and phone numbers of the researcher as well as her university professors and was told that he or she had an option to withdraw from the study at any time.

The interview began with a series of questions concerning teacher experience and background as well as classroom demographic questions. As in a semi-structured interview, the researcher had six questions that she included in the interview (see Table 1). Interview questions were loosely based upon the initial interview questions used by Giangreco et. al., (1993). These questions were covered in each interview, although not always in the same order. The interviewer attempted to maintain flow of conversation so that the participant remained relaxed. The researcher used probing questions as needed.

Interview length varied from 25 minutes to 65 minutes. Each of the participants had been asked to participate in a 30 minute interview. None of the participants indicated a need to leave quickly.

TABLE 1

Interview Question Guide

Background Information

Years of teaching experience

Experience integrating students with severe disabilities

Educational background - including courses in special education

Classroom Information

Grade level

Number of students without disabilities

Number of students with disabilities

Amount of support staff - number and time available

Integration Experience

1. Describe your present situation with (fictional name of student).

2. What have been your feelings from the beginning to the present in relationship to the integration process.

3. How have you been involved in the educational planning for this student?

4. What has been your personal experience of the availability and value of personnel and administrative supports?

5. How would you describe this experience for the students with and without disabilities in this classroom?

6. What would be your recommendations for strategies to integrate students into regular classrooms?

A summary of the interview was sent to each co-researcher in June, 1994. The summary paraphrased the transcribed interview. The co-researchers were contacted by phone to verify that each summary was accurate. None of the co-researchers had any concerns about the interview summaries. They were again given phone numbers for the researcher, if they had any questions or concerns. Further discussion with the co-researchers about data themes was not possible due to the summer holiday break.

After each interview, the researcher made field notes about the classroom, the participant and his or her own response to the interview. These were used to improve the questioning skills used for the next interview.

Reliability and validity. Within qualitative research, validity and reliability are somewhat different from that within quantitative research. Validity refers to the extent to which the data and subsequent analysis are an accurate picture of the experience of co-researchers. To ensure that this accuracy could be achieved, interview strategies were researched through a review of the literature (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As well, field notes written at the completion of each interview allowed the researcher to analyse and improve upon her interview skills.

The researchers presuppositions and beliefs may interfere with the questioning and data analysis of the interviews. Bracketing, referring to the process of limiting one's personal biases and presuppositions about the topic (Polkinghorne, 1983), was consciously reviewed by the researcher. The researcher examined her own theoretical outlook on

integration, questioned her attitudes, and attempted to guard against her own personal bias throughout the interview and analysis process. This took place in the recording of detailed interview field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

To further control for validity issues such as generalizability, the researcher used the same interview guide for each interview. The questions within the interview were not always presented in the same sequence, but each question was addressed in all of the interviews. Secondly, as noted above, the interviewer sent a summary of each interview to the co-researchers. The summary was read by the co-researchers. Then, in a telephone follow-up, the co-researchers were given opportunity to discuss any problems or to set up another interview. Since the study was written during the summer break it was not possible to send a final copy of the report to co-researchers.

External validity was controlled by interviewing teachers from more than one school. Four schools in four geographical areas of the city were used.

Reliability refers to the extent to which a study can be replicated. Reliability in research using interviews is difficult to control due to the uniqueness of the researcher and the person to be interviewed. As per LeCompte and Preissle (1992), reliability in this study was addressed in the following ways. External reliability was enhanced by clearly defining the researcher's role and status, and by ensuring that the researcher and subject had not met previously. Co-researchers were given information about the researcher both over the phone and before

the interview began. The researcher also took time to establish a comfortable environment for each co-researcher. Interviews were conducted at the co-researcher's convenience and in his or her classroom or school. External reliability was further enhanced by defining the subject characteristics and selection procedures before selection began.

Internal reliability was controlled by tape-recording the interviews. This allowed the researcher to accurately transcribe the information given by the co-researchers.

Data analysis. Each interview transcript was read and coded into large meaning units. The data were reviewed for patterns as well as for topics. Phrases and words that represented these topics and patterns were used as coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Coding categories were assigned abbreviations and were listed. Each unit of information was then marked with the codes. Some of the units were assigned two to three codes. The computer was used to "cut and paste" the data into each category.

The data in each category was then outlined and summarized. At this point, some of the categories needed to be amalgamated. The categories were reviewed several times before the final theme units were chosen.

The analysis of the themes consisted of two types. The first was a comparison between the five classroom teachers and the one resource room teacher. Since one of the teachers was a resource room teacher, her position was quite different than the other teachers, so it was

decided to compare her statements with the other teachers.

The second analysis was a comparison between all the teachers. The sub themes within each theme was labelled according to the number of times they were repeated across interviews.

The results of the data analysis are described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

Results

In this chapter, the themes and sub themes from the interviews with the teachers will be described. A brief description of each theme and then a more detailed description of the sub themes will follow. Quotes that typify the themes will also be provided. At the end of each section, comments made by the resource room co-researcher will be compared to those of the classroom teachers.

Ten themes emerged from the data analysis. Eight of the themes were further subdivided into sub-categories. The breakdown of themes is summarized in Table 2 on page 43.

TABLE 2

Summary of Results -Themes

Theme 1: Student Behaviour
- Disruptive behaviour
- Behaviour Management Strategies
- Positive Behaviours

Theme 2: Instructional Program
- Individualized Educational Program
- Evaluation

Theme 3: Classroom Organization

Theme 4: Student Skills
- Cognitive
- Social
- Behaviour
- Physical

Theme 5: Peer Relationships
- Students without disabilities
- Students with disabilities

Theme 6: Teacher Feelings and Beliefs
- The year in review
- Beliefs about integration

Theme 7: Support Concerns
- In school supports
- Administration supports

Theme 8: Teacher Assistant
- Teacher-Assistant Relationship
- Management of Assistants

Theme 9: Parental Concerns
- Parents of students with disabilities
- Parents of students without disabilities

Theme 10: Future Considerations

Theme 1: Student Behaviour

This theme involves the discussion of two types of behaviour: disruptive and positive behaviour. It also discusses the behaviour management strategies that were used by the co-researchers. A related area is found under the peer relationship theme, where students' behaviour towards their classmates is discussed.

Disruptive behaviour. All co-researchers mentioned some types of inappropriate behaviours displayed by their students with moderate to severe disabilities. In two situations those behaviours were violent and aggressive. Students would bite, hit, slap, pull hair, kick, throw things, bang their heads, scream, holler and moan. Both of these co-researchers expressed their frustration and difficulty with the student behaviours. A co-researcher expressed herself in the following manner

> ...You're not used to being kicked, slapped or puncheu, you know, it is a new thing. You know if he is sitting there in the room and yelling at me to shut up...for that to come from a six year old.....

The remaining four co-researchers described their student behaviours as immature, manipulative, temperamental, screaming, groaning or making noises that interfered with the other children. These were all behaviours that were not aggressive towards students or co-researchers, however, each co-researcher mentioned that these behaviours disrupted classroom routine, "...I can't even talk loud

enough to go over her screaming," was one co-researcher's comment.

Classmates of the students with disabilities reacted in different ways. Some students would become extremely frustrated, some would giggle and the majority would ignore the students altogether. Students without disabilities and without previous exposure to students with disabilities reacted to disruptive behaviours more than did students who had previous exposure to students with disabilities. Peer reactions to students with disabilities are further discussed in Theme 5.

Management Strategies. Each co-researcher discussed the strategies that he or she used to manage behaviours of students with disabilities. The strategies used are summarized and listed below:

1. Co-researchers would physically control behaviour. For example, one student was blocked from leaving her desk so that she would not run around and throw things from student desks. In another situation, staff needed to physically restrain students from hurting others or themselves.

2. Co-researchers trained classmates without disabilities to deal with inappropriate behaviours of students with disabilities. Students without disabilities were taught how to physically touch students with disabilities so that they wouldn't become upset or to ignore inappropriate behaviours. One co-researcher cited the example of a student with disabilities that, "...goes around and she is hitting kids. And so my kids just know to tell her to keep her hands down and they know to bring her to her desk and put her head down..." All the co-

researchers mentioned the value of peer modelling. They stressed the power that students without disabilities had to model positive examples of behaviour in the classroom.

3. Co-researchers indicated the need to have manageable goals and consistent expectations.

4. Time-out was mentioned by four of the co-researchers. It was used when students with disabilities were aggressive or disrupting class by screaming. One co-researcher was somewhat defensive in his explanation of how he used time-out. He was careful to explain that the student was initially physically aggressive towards him and his assistant.

> ...so it was a lot of kicking, biting, slapping, yelling and hollering. And what we did was at the first sign of anything, any non-compliant or negative behaviour, he was gone (out of the room). Sometimes he was timed out for 10-15 minutes. But he slapped us, he bit (the assistant) and drew blood.

In this same classroom, the co-researcher had accessed a consultant to aid in behaviour management strategies. He had also established clear expectations, routines and guidelines for student behaviour. He was also clear in his interview, that this same student, in his classroom for the second year, was now completely involved in the classroom. Disruptions were almost non-existent and the use of time-outs was no longer necessary.

5. Co-researchers had expectations that students would complete the work required. Co-researchers would not allow themselves to be

manipulated by students. One co-researcher describes the situation,

> ...often at the beginning of the year she would put up a fuss so we would cuddle her and put her in a big chair and say, "don't be noisy". And that is what she wanted. We later found out that she was manipulating us.

In the above example, the co-researcher later mentioned that she began to insist that the student complete her activity before she was allowed a time to cuddle. She explained,

> ...so now if she gets into one of those, we will make sure she does a bit of something and then she can cool off for a bit. She has to do certain things, though, no matter if she throws a "fit" or not.

Each teacher used a variety of strategies for the disruptive behaviours that were displayed in their classroom. The strategies varied according to the severity of the behaviours. Each co-researcher implied that there needed to be a flexibility on the part of the teacher. They needed to be able to view each day as a new beginning.

Positive behaviours. Although disruptive behaviours garnered much attention by the co-researchers, they were also adamant about the improvement that they had seen in student behaviours. Improvement occurred in the areas of increased social interactions,improved self-esteem, and reduction of inappropriate behaviours. Some of their descriptions of student improvement follow: "...she (the student with disabilities) has been making noises, and is happy and smiley and trying to grab your hand...", "...but now most

times he is right here by me, or he actually even sat in the middle of the room, which is something that at the beginning of the first year he would never have done," "...socially, I think he is more aware of not having to be the centre of attention..."

The demands of managing disruptive behaviours were difficult for all of the co-researchers. Each co-researcher described strategies that he or she had found to be effective within his or her classroom and with his or her students. These strategies seemed to vary with each student. However, the use of classmates and the benefit of peer modelling were affirmed by all of the co-researchers, regardless of the severity of the student's behaviour. It is encouraging to note that, in each situation, co-researchers mentioned positive growth in the student's behaviour.

The resource room teacher was concerned about student behaviours disrupting the regular classroom. She also used many of the behaviour management strategies used by the other co-researchers. She stipulated that student placement was dependent upon student behaviours. If student behaviours interfered with classroom learning, then she felt that students should be removed from the classroom. However, she also noted that students within the classroom became accustomed to the inappropriate behaviours and would ignore some of the less disruptive behaviours. She specified the behaviour expectations in the classroom were for students to "...go in, sit in a chair without making any noise." Other co-researchers also indicated that students were given some freedom to vocalise and move about.

Students with disabilities who were based in the resource room were placed in the regular classroom conditional upon their behaviour. When students with disabilities were disruptive, the classroom assistant would remove the students to the resource room. The other co-researchers did not have an alternate placement to send students from the classroom. The students with disabilities were based in the regular classroom, and the classroom students and staff as well as the student with disabilities all had to adapt.

Although disruptive behaviours were included in much of the interview discussion, co-researchers were very much aware of appropriate management strategies as well as positive changes in student behaviour.

Theme 2: Instructional Program

This theme primarily concerned itself with the individualized Education Plan for students, and its implementation. Another sub-theme that is closely related is the evaluation process for students. The discussion of classroom routines and strategies is discussed in Theme 3: Classroom Organization.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP). All of the co-researchers had written an IEP for their students with disabilities and took full responsibility for the student's daily instructional program. One co-researcher was still modifying and writing the IEP in June. Co-researchers also maintained some form of evaluation and wrote reports

for each student. They found that consultants were able to provide support. Co-researchers also indicated that goals needed to be simple and realistic. Co-researchers had a set format that they all followed. Although they discussed the process of writing the IEPs, the co-researchers did not elaborate upon the specifics of the form.

The IEPs were written with support from principals, resource facilitators, consultants, teacher assistants and parents. All of the co-researchers reviewed the IEP with the parents. Two co-researchers had parents that wanted to write the IEP. Both of these co-researchers were adamant that as the teacher they were responsible for the writing of the IEP. The principal was used as a mediator with the parents. Three co-researchers indicated that the parents were involved during the writing process.

The three co-researchers who previously had not had a student integrated into their classroom were quite negative in their comments about the IEP. They felt that it was too involved and impractical. They had difficulty writing objectives that would apply within the classroom. One co-researcher stated: "...but I don't think it (IEP) has to be elaborate and cause you hours of pain to do it. " Another commented about the IEP, "..we are doing it just to have something written down. So if someone came in and checked us, there is this formal part of it. " The IEP, according to these three co-researchers, was written to conform to policy, not for the benefit of daily classroom instruction.

The resource room teacher wrote the IEPs for the students in consultation with the classroom teacher. Within that same school, if

teachers had students who did not receive support from the resource room teacher, the classroom teacher was fully responsible for the IEP. The room teacher was available for consultation and assistance to the other classroom teachers.

Evaluation. Each co-researcher wrote regular reports for students during the school reporting intervals. Student information was kept in daily logs or as samples of student work. One co-researcher felt that the student should receive a report card as other students do. She changed some of the headings on the report card and then wrote it up. Other co-researchers did not mention the type of report card used.

The IEP and evaluation were seen by co-researchers as an administrative requirement of the instructional program for students with disabilities. Co-researchers took ownership for the IEP and included parents in the review of the IEP. Co-researchers that had previous experience in writing IEPs were quite matter of fact about the process. They were realistic in goal selection and kept the IEP practical. Those co-researchers new to the IEP were somewhat overwhelmed by the paperwork and the formality of the IEP. They cited more need for consultative support when writing the IEP and did not seem to find the IEP helpful in their daily routine. Evaluation of students was on-going and different with each co-researcher. The most common method of evaluation seemed to be daily logs and samples of work.

Theme 3: Classroom Organization

Co-researchers provided examples of their classroom routine and the ways in which students with disabilities were included within their classroom. This section will discuss some of the teaching strategies used by the co-researchers and also some of the classroom configurations used within the schools.

All of the co-researchers were aware of the power of peer modelling and training. Two of the co-researchers used a "helper of the day" to provide opportunities for classmates without disabilities to assist the students with disabilities. One co-researcher used a similar plan but expanded it to "helper of the week". Students without disabilities had specific guidelines for helping. In one class they were asked to help with the daily calendar routine. In another classroom students were recorders for the student when she was dictating her journal. All co-researchers mentioned group work or cooperative learning groups as ways in which all students were involved in the classroom. One co-researcher mentioned that she could "...use the other students as a tool."

Co-researchers mentioned that they had to adapt curriculum, but they did not express difficulty with that requirement. They felt that the students should participate in everything even if the instruction or assignment was adapted for their needs. For example, co-researchers stated that: "...she has do certain things, though, no matter if she throws a fit or not;" and "...he is treated the same as everyone else."

Two of the co-researchers mentioned that they had to adjust the

physical layout of their classrooms to accommodate student equipment. They had students with physical needs that required either a wheelchair, standing frame or walker. Desks were arranged so that the wheelchair could be accommodated easily through the rows. One co-researcher discussed her student's need for routine. As a result, she kept his desk in the same place all year, and tried to maintain as many regular routines as possible.

Within the resource room model, the students with disabilities were integrated into the regular classroom for approximately 30% of the total instructional time. During recess and lunch breaks, they were part of the regular mainstream. Students in the resource room were integrated as much as their behaviour permitted. The co-researcher explained that in the upper elementary grades the teachers had placed students in their age-appropriate classrooms. However, "...it was so hard to adapt the regular curriculum and work with these kids, that they (resource room teacher) had to do the language arts (in another classroom) and that kind of separates (the students with disabilities) as well."

The resource room co-researcher also discussed the use of classroom peers for modelling appropriate behaviours. She also used buddies to assist students with disabilities.

At the school with the resource room, classroom teachers expressed some concern about adapting student curriculum. Other co-researchers expressed minimal concern about adapting programs.

Theme 4: Student Skills

Co-researchers discussed the changes that they had seen in students throughout the year. The three main areas mentioned were cognitive skills, social skills, and behaviours. One teacher mentioned the improvement in physical skills. The following discussion will review the information given for each skill area.

Cognitive skills. Two of the co-researchers discussed the academic programs of their students. Students were included in adapted reading, writing and math programs. One student had a separate pull-out program with another teacher for reading in addition to the instruction she received in the classroom. The co-researcher stated that, " I think she could be capable of reading so I have to give her the opportunity." Two of these co-researchers had described these students as having moderate disabilities. Students with less severe disabilities displayed skill improvement in academic work.

The remaining four co-researchers who had students with more severe disabilities, commented that students had some cognition of consequences and environmental awareness. For example: "I think he understands more of what is going on and is more comfortable with the situation;" and, "...I believe now that she knows that, 'if I just throw a fit , I will get to sit in that nice cozy chair and take a nap' " and,

> ...she knows a few words and will respond to a few words...She definitely understands snack. So if we say snack or lunch, she knows to go and get her lunch kit. And that took about seven

months just to get her to do that.

In their discussion of these areas of growth, the co-researchers took pride in their student's achievements, no matter how small each step.

Social Skills. Within this area, all the co-researchers again indicated that students had demonstrated growth, developing a sense of belonging to the group. "I just think that he has more self-esteem. He feels like he belongs with the other kids and belongs with a group." Another co-researcher mentioned that, "She never has a problem of not being included in a group. As a matter of fact, she can be a little bit of a snob sometimes."

One of the students was more aware of the other teachers within the school than he had been previously. The co-researcher described the situation, "Now he will actually go up to teachers. Like last week, he went up to a teacher who he has never spoken to before and she was here all last year. It was really amazing."

All the students improved in peer relationships. Whereas previously one student had never accepted a partner in gym class, he now would accept a partner and would be willing to participate in class. Several of the co-researchers mentioned that students had special friends within the classroom to whom they responded more positively. "I know that I can leave Jill for a second, and say, 'Linda, take Jill,' and I know that Jill will listen to her and go along with what Linda

wants her to do." Peer relationships are discussed further in Theme 5.

Behaviours. As was seen in the previous theme discussion, co-researchers expressed that all students had demonstrated reductions in inappropriate behaviours and increases in appropriate behaviours.

Physical skills. Two of the co-researchers had three students with physical needs in addition to their cognitive and behaviour disabilities. One student was in a wheelchair and the teacher felt that they "...couldn't do a lot with her. She has very little movement of her body." This same student in the wheelchair however had increased in her tolerance of the standing frame since the beginning of the school year. The other students demonstrated better walking skills. Students were more accepting of hand-over-hand and tactile activities. Eating and toiletting skills were also included as areas of growth.

Even within the range of students with moderate to severe disabilities, the type of program varied for each student. Regardless of the programs of the students, all of the co-researchers felt that the students had progressed in some areas of their programs.

The resource room co-researcher discussed the improvements in behaviour. However, she did not discuss the changes in social or cognitive skills. She felt that if a student's "functioning level was low," that students would not benefit from integration. She stated that,

> I don't know that I could look at each individual child and say that the child has benefited this way or that way. I can't say that is the

case but I cannot say that they have not benefited either. But I cannot see that there has been an extreme amount of growth from the integration other than the fact that they will go in there and will sit down.

Theme 5: Peer Relationships

This theme covers the reactions of students without disabilities to students with disabilities in their classroom. It also covers the reactions of students with disabilities to their classmates.

Regular student responses to students with disabilities. Co-researchers were pleased with classroom peer responses to students with disabilities. Some general comments were: "...the kids accept her and they just love it;" and "...all of the other kids, love to read to her...;" and "I think really it is a perk for the kids, it is a plus."

Co-researchers explained that students initially needed some teaching in how to react and interact with the students.

> Sometimes she will do things like pull her hair or poke her eyes. So we have to spend a lot of time working with the kids. Like teaching them to tell Susan, "no", and pull her hand away. Sometimes Susan will do something really silly and the kids used to laugh before. And they were taught not to laugh because she does not understand and then she is going to keep doing it. So I really had to do some training with the kids.

Co-researchers encouraged a peer tutoring relationship by having

a "helper of the day or week" who assisted the student with disabilities. Co-researchers mentioned that students would all want to help the student and that some students would "...die for that position...", when speaking of the helper of the week.

Students with previous experience with students with disabilities seemed to have less difficulty adjusting to students with disabilities. In the fourth grade classroom, students had been together for all of their schooling. During a physical education class at the beginning of the year the co-researcher explained that, "...when she came up to bat, they (classmates) just changed. It was exactly what she needed. They encouraged her. Someone ran with her because she did not know what base to go to and they just showed her what to do." The co-researcher related this story with pride and some pleasant surprise in her voice.

Co-researchers suggested some advantages for the students without disabilities. The first of these was an understanding and empathy for individuals with disabilities. Students became more tolerant and patient with student behaviours. Closely related to this was a recognition of diversity amongst groups. Co-researchers mentioned the benefits to students without disabilities. For example: "They learn that he is disabled and that he can do things that they can't do and they accept it. They are more accepting people when they have those kids in their room." Another co-researcher stated that,

> I think that they are learning that we are all different and we need to get along and we all need help at some time from somebody and

> they all know that there are times when it is better if you learn together and there are times when it is better to work individually and there are some people who need more help with certain things than others and that is what I try to establish in the classroom.

Students with no previous exposure to students with disabilities had some difficulty understanding the student with disabilities. They would stare and comment about student behaviours or physical abilities when they first entered the classroom. One co-researcher describes one of her student's reactions to the student with disabilities:

> ...there was a boy who repeated (the grade)...and he will say "quit doing that...why are you doing that for?"...and all the other kids will right away gang up on him and say "that is how she is, leave her alone..."

Three of the co-researchers mentioned this phenomenon.

Co-researchers mentioned that most students rarely reacted to inappropriate behaviours by the end of the school year. Students developed a tolerance for other student behaviour. One co-researcher stated: "The kids will just keep on going and get their work done and won't even lift their heads to look at her. So I think they just got used to having her in the room." Students accepted the students with disabilities as members of their classroom.

One co-researcher mentioned that her students did have difficulty adjusting to the student's behaviour. In this situation the student was very aggressive. The students (Grade One) had difficulty understanding why the teacher and the assistant were physically

restraining the student. They also mentioned that they accomplished more in the classroom when the student was absent. The teacher added that, in her second year with this student, the behaviours had greatly decreased and that her present class had not made any of those comments.

Students with disabilities. Co-researchers all gave examples of how the students with disabilities were aware of their classmates. That awareness was demonstrated by smiles, hugs, reaching out to students, eye contact and wanting to socialise with the students. Students seemed to develop special friendships with some of their classmates.

When discussing the social aspects of the classroom with co-researchers, the majority of the comments centred around the benefits for the regular classroom students. Co-researchers found that, after some initial training to channel students' willingness to help, students were able to be positive influences and friends for students with disabilities. The resource room teacher did mention some negative effects of the behaviour of students with disabilities upon regular students.

The advantages of the regular classroom placement for students with disabilities was a consistent theme with all of the co-researchers. They were all able to cite specific examples of growth for the students.

Theme 6: Teacher Feelings and Beliefs

The feelings expressed by the co-researchers were as varied as the individuality of each co-researcher. Each co-researcher brought his or her past experiences and philosophical outlook into this part of the interview. The sub-categories discussed within this theme are the feelings about the past school year followed by their feelings about integration as a process.

The year in review. All of the co-researchers indicated that their school year had been very positive. The three co-researchers who had no previous experience with integration were initially apprehensive. Words used to express their feelings were: scary, nervous, anxiety, stress, panic, frustrating, and physically exhausting. Their fears related to the need for support, the experience of having to work with a teaching assistant, inconsistent board policies, IEP write-ups, physical management of the student and the fear of not having enough instructional knowledge. One of the co-researchers initially questioned the placement for the student, because she felt she didn't know what she should be doing. She stated,

> ...anxiety at the beginning...stress just because I think you know having two (university) courses is not (enough). You know there are teachers who are special needs teachers that could deal with it, and I thought I don't really know the first thing about what I am supposed to be doing with her. Should I be teaching her a bit more, should I be laying off? So that was tough at first. It was

scary.

Despite their fears and concerns, all of the co-researchers mentioned that they were willing to do their best. They felt that each student had the right to the best instruction that teachers could provide.

Because they were interviewed towards the end of the school year, all the co-researchers expressed their support for the year's experiences. They mentioned the benefits for the students, their strong affection for the students and the personal rewards of watching students grow and change. One co-researcher summed up her feelings in this way,

> I have had a couple of people ask me, "how is your year going and would you do it again?" and I say, "most definitely". And if I had a choice between not having the girls in here and having the girls, I would choose having the girls. It has been a good experience.

Beliefs about integration. All the co-researchers had some strong opinions concerning integration. Each co-researcher expressed the right of the parents to choose the classroom placement for their children. Some of them questioned that decision but were quite willing to work with the parents and the school to provide a positive classroom.

Most of the co-researchers were convinced that integrated classrooms were the optimal placement for all students. There was some question from five of the co-researchers about pulling the students out for resource room assistance. The resource room teacher

felt quite strongly that there should be an option to pull students out for individualized instruction. She was cautious about jumping on the "band wagon". She was especially concerned that high school students wouldn't be learning the practical life skills that they would need for adulthood. However, she did assert that she was not in favour of completely segregated classrooms.

One of the other co-researchers, whose student received individualized instruction in a resource room, discussed working with this teacher to bring instruction into the regular classroom. She felt that students were best served in the regular classroom.

Co-researchers also discussed the need for age-appropriate classrooms. One co-researcher, working at a district site school, was concerned about the numbers of special needs students being disproportionate to the general population. Designated district site schools receive additional support staff, professional and financial resources to provide programs for students with disabilities who live outside of the school's boundaries. Therefore, these schools have a larger number of students with disabilities than a neighbourhood school. He expressed, "I think there have been times when they have wanted to dump whole classes in and that is more saturation than integration and I do not like that. But ...I have two coming in next year. I do not anticipate any problems."

Co-researchers were open and honest about their feelings throughout the past year. They acknowledged that some of the days were "tough" and that they had some questions. They openly

expressed their fears and concerns. Yet each co-researcher came back to his or her over-riding positive feelings. It was interesting to note that four of the six co-researchers had pursued the option of keeping the students in their classrooms for another year. Strong feelings of attachment had developed throughout the year.

Theme 7: Support

Within this area of concern, co-researchers discussed two types of supports available to them. The first was that of in-school supports and the second was that of district administrative supports available to them.

In-school supports. Co-researchers were very pleased with the support they received from principals and vice-principals. All of them noted that principals accorded them professional authority in the decision-making for their classroom. Four of the six co-researchers described the principals as being flexible. Two co-researchers mentioned that their principal served as a support during some discussions with parents. These same principals searched for answers from the school board administration when the co-researchers were having difficulty getting answers about physiotherapy services and vision testing for one of the students. Co-researchers at another school had had a recent change in principals. They were pleased that this principal was providing them with some team planning time. One co-researcher praised her school administration, saying,

The support administration is wonderful here...they give you free

reign in the sense that they realise that we are professional and that what we are trying to do is best for the kids. And we work together so that there is not, "you can't do this," or, "you can't do that," or, "we want this or that."

Co-researchers also mentioned the value of site visitations to other schools and workshops and inservice that were available to them. Two co-researchers had gone to another school for site visits. Three co-researchers had attended workshops and inservice outside of school time.

Two of the four schools had a resource teacher or inclusive education teacher. These teachers provided professional and instructional support to the classroom teacher. One co-researcher was impressed with the inclusive education teacher and was looking forward to working with her in a team situation. One co-researcher mentioned that she had been affirmed by her colleagues as doing "...a pretty good job."

School board administration. Each co-researcher accessed consultant help from the school board or the local department of education. One co-researcher believed that she had not received adequate support. Any phone calls she made were not returned. Five of the six co-researchers did receive consultant support. This support varied with each co-researcher. As a group, they received support in writing individualized Education Plans, planning instructional programs, assessment of students, communication and behaviour

management strategies. Additional supports from other agencies were: speech and language pathologist assistance, follow-up from the local rehabilitation hospital and from a nurse at the same hospital. Co-researchers described the support as "...readily available...," and beneficial.

Two of the co-researchers expressed frustration about the school board's communication with the school. Within this school, two co-researchers were the first teachers to integrate students with severe disabilities into their classrooms. They felt that school board policies were not communicated as clearly as they would have liked at the beginning of the school year. They believed that an established agreement between the parents and the school board regarding services that would be provided by the school had not been clearly communicated to the school. The co-researchers felt that they and their principals were constantly on the phone waiting for answers for their concerns. These co-researchers also found the paper work overwhelming. The other four co-researchers did not mention this frustration, but they were all in schools where integration had been in place for a number of years. Perhaps those same questions had been addressed in previous years.

The resource room co-researcher also had strong support from her school administration. She had accessed consultants and speech therapists with good results. Her only differing comments related to teacher assistant support. As a district site, she understood that her school received extra support staff. She felt that this extra support

helped make integration work at their school.

Support by school administration was viewed as excellent by all of the co-researchers. All but one of the co-researchers felt that consultant support was also timely and practical. Two co-researchers expressed some concern understanding school board policies related to accessible support services and the parameters of their responsibility.

Theme 8: Teacher Assistants

All of the co-researchers had assistants assigned to their classrooms. The amount of time varied for each student. Four classrooms had a full-time assistant. One classroom had a 1/2 time assistant and one classroom had an assistant for one morning each week.

Teacher-assistant relationship. Each co-researcher stressed the importance of a good working relationship with his or her assistant. All of the co-researchers had a positive relationship with their assistant. One co-researcher summed up, "I think the best thing that could happen is that you have a good aide; someone who you can work with and someone who understands what you would like done...." Co-researchers mentioned shared goals and a mutual understanding as one characteristic of a good working relationship, "...between the two of us we seem to have this unspoken understanding, even with what is going on in the classroom."

Another characteristic of this team relationship was the delegation of decision making by the co-researcher to the assistant. For example: "They (teacher and assistant) have to have the same goals in mind for (the child) and be consistent. Like if I am away and the aide has to take over."

One co-researcher, in describing a situation where a student had acted up in class and was removed from class by the assistant, assumed that the assistant would use good judgment and discernment. "If she (the assistant) feels that she wants to try and bring her (the student) back I leave that an option for her."

One co-researcher mentioned that her assistant's perception of her responsibilities had initially been quite different than those responsibilities required within her classroom. The assistant had previously worked with students with minimal disabilities. She was accustomed to students who demonstrated progress in academic areas. The student she was now working with had physical and cognitive needs of which she had limited experience. The co-researcher described the assistant as, "...she loves her (the student) to death and everything. It is just that she feels useless, like she is not doing enough for her."

Management of assistants. All of the co-researchers mentioned that the assistant was assigned to the classroom and not only to the student with disabilities. In each classroom, the assistant worked with other students as well. Other tasks that the assistant might be asked to

do were: preparing bulletin boards, photocopying, instructional work with other students, and library research.

One teacher discussed her need to develop skills in managing support personnel in her classroom. Other teachers implied that this was a skill needed by teachers when they discussed the team relationship with their assistants. They spoke of the need for communication between them and the mutual understanding of goals. One teacher mentioned that she had been involved in the hiring of the assistant. She said, "...because of my personality, I have to have a certain type of person so you have to pick somebody that you know is not going to bowl you over." This same teacher requested that the assistant be included in the interview with the researcher.

The resource room co-researcher reiterated the same feelings as did the other co-researchers. She discussed her school's team relationship between assistants and teachers.

Co-researchers emphasized the need for teachers and assistants to work together. Assistants were involved in many aspects of the classroom. Their responsibilities were not restricted to working with students. All the co-researchers had a good working relationship with their assistants and saw that relationship as integral to the integration process.

Theme 9: Parental Concerns

Two sub-categories were explored within this theme. The first was concerns of parents with children who have disabilities. Co-

researchers mentioned parents in conjunction with IEP write-ups and the communication with parents. The other sub-category was concerns of parents of students without disabilities.

Parents of students with disabilities. All parents of students with disabilities had input into their child's IEP. The amount of input varied with each child. One couple wished to write the IEP. Another set of parents was involved weekly with their child in the school. The remaining four sets of parents were included in the reviews of the IEP and the initial set-up of the IEP.

Two co-researchers described some misunderstanding with parents. An agreement had been established by the school board and the parents prior to their children attending the school. The co-researchers felt that they were not given all the necessary information and this resulted in some misunderstandings between the parents and the co-researchers. Through discussion with the principal and the school board, these concerns were satisfactorily resolved.

All of the parents were involved in the decision-making for school placement of their children. In one situation, the school board suggested a special class placement but the parents wanted their child in a neighbourhood school. Three of the co-researchers indicated that they didn't always agree with the parent's choice of classroom placement, but they respected the right of the parent to choose.

One couple was very involved in the daily classroom routine. The mother volunteered at least twice a week within the classroom. Parents

also stated that they wanted their child as involved as possible within the classroom. The co-researcher was quite comfortable with this involvement. Parents had expressed to the co-researcher that they were pleased with the classroom situation.

Communication with parents varied with each co-researcher. As the needs of the child became more involved, the communication with parents increased. Each co-researcher indicated that there was open communication with the parents.

Parents of children without disabilities. Two co-researchers mentioned some concerns of parents that had been brought to their attention. In the first situation, one of the classmates of a student had told her parents that her teacher was physically restraining one of the students. The parent came in and discussed the situation with the co-researcher. When the parent had an opportunity to observe the student's aggression and discuss the situation with the co-researcher, the parent became very supportive of the co-researcher. The parent responded that: "...well if she (her daughter) is going to have these children in her classroom for the next 11 years, she is going to have to get used to it."

Within the resource room model, parents of the seven children without disabilities who were in the classroom were concerned that their children did not have as many opportunities for discussion and peer interaction. The classroom also included six students with disabilities. As a result, the school decided to restructure the classes

and disperse the students with disabilities amongst all the regular classes for the upcoming year. Within this same school, the resource room co-researcher indicated that the parental community was in strong support of integration.

The reciprocal communication between parents and teachers was demonstrated by all of the co-researchers. Co-researchers were supportive of parental decisions yet they were also quick to point out that they were responsible for the instructional program within their classroom. Very little mention was made of parents of other students within the classrooms. Co-researchers demonstrated good communication and problem solving abilities that transcended any concerns.

Theme 10: Future Considerations

When asked to make suggestions or recommendations for future integration efforts, co-researchers provided a wealth of recommendations. These fall into several sub-categories. The first is that of school organization strategies. The second sub-category is that of suggestions for classroom teachers.

School organization strategies. Co-researchers had several suggestions to ease the integration process. Several co-researchers mentioned the need for space for equipment and for easy wheelchair access. They also discussed the space that was needed for classroom assistants. All but one of the co-researchers felt that students should be

placed in their neighbourhood schools in age-appropriate classrooms. The resource room teacher felt that this was the ideal situation, but was also convinced that each student needed to be placed dependent upon his or her unique needs. All co-researchers were firm in their belief that parents had the right to choose placement for their child.

Co-researchers mentioned that classroom assistants were essential to a positive experience. They felt that teachers and assistants needed a good working relationship. All the co-researchers recognised the value of a good team.

Two co-researchers discussed the need for school board policies to be communicated to the school and classroom teacher at the beginning of the school year. One co-researcher felt that money should not be stressed when discussing student placement. She believed that the student needs should be assessed and then the placement should be decided.

Three of the co-researchers believed that classroom teachers should have the option to have students with disabilities in their classroom. All of the co-researchers discussed the fear that many teachers experienced concerning integration. The co-researchers felt that this was a fear of the unknown. They also wondered whether the teachers would have the same fears if they had seen positive examples of integration happening in their schools. One co-researcher mentioned that, in her school, teachers had only seen her student in the hallway when he was being disruptive. She mentioned that,

...just because you teach does not mean you should have a special

> needs child in your class. .. I cannot teach Physics 30. I am not qualified. Some people just like those kids (students with disabilities) more that others do...and hopefully within the staff they can look around and see who suits it (integrating students with disabilities).

Another co-researcher was pro-teacher choice also. However, her view differed slightly from that expressed above. She commented that, "...a good teacher can teach something to anybody and if you really believe that, then you're going to figure out what it is that this child can learn in this classroom." It's interesting to note that these co-researchers had the same recommendation but had slightly differing viewpoints. The second co-researcher seemed to support the professional abilities and skills of teachers.

One of the co-researchers believed that she could have used more university training. She had taken two courses but found that they lacked in practicality. She believed that she could have benefited from training in specific strategies that could be used in the classroom. Another co-researcher mentioned that teachers needed to have some strategies when school began. One co-researcher discussed the need for good discipline strategies.

Suggestions for classroom teachers. Co-researchers suggested that teachers needed to be flexible and spontaneous. Teachers needed to be aware that changes might be small and that they might need to write short term objectives for the child. They recommended

that each student have individualized goals where curriculum was adapted specifically for the student. Teachers also needed to be realistic and not expect miracles. Co-researchers also discussed the need for teachers to have a commitment to students' right to be in the classroom. As one co-researcher put it, "...have a really positive attitude and just keep hanging in there. Then it works!"

All the co-researchers believed that integration was a positive experience for all students and all teachers. The general consensus was that students with special needs should be in the regular classroom. The resource room teacher, qualified that integration should be determined by individual student needs and behaviour. The resource room teacher condoned a slow approach to implementing integration of students with disabilities into the regular classroom.

Co-researchers, in their diversity, provided a rich array of recommendations. Their concerns primarily centred around the needs of teachers rather than on administrative needs. They were empathetic with teacher concerns and offered realistic suggestions.

In this chapter, the interview data has been summarized into ten themes. Each theme has presented the information from all of the co-researchers. Then the information from the resource room co-researcher has been compared to that of the other five co-researchers.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter will serve several purposes. First, this chapter will compare the results of the data analysis with the research from the literature review. This chapter will also cover the limitations of the study. Finally, conclusions and implications raised by the study will be presented.

A Comparison of the Results with the Literature Reviewed

Study results compare favourably with that of the literature. The literature has described ways in which classrooms should operate to best achieve a positive integrated classroom. Research studies have also raised concerns of teachers about integration. Researchers have studied the attitudes of teachers and reviewed perceived needs of teachers integrating students with disabilities. The findings of this study have revealed that many of the suggestions put forth in the literature are practised within these six classrooms. These positive examples of integration in the classroom have indicated that willing teachers can make the classroom a positive learning environment for all students.

Stainback et. al. (1990), in their discussion of inclusive classrooms discussed the factors that make a classroom inclusive. One of these factors was the requirement that rules within the classroom demonstrate that all students are accorded fair, equal and respectful treatment. As demonstrated by co-researchers, students with

disabilities had clear behavioural expectations. Students with disabilities were expected to complete their assigned work. Students without disabilities were taught to work with students with disabilities. They were also expected to respect individual differences and received training to help them carry out this belief (Hamre-Nieutupski, 1993). As discussed by Giangreco and Putnam (1991), co-researchers took responsibility for the instruction within their classroom.

Research has advocated cooperative learning, peer tutoring and social skills training (Anderson-Inman, 1987; Hamre-Nieutupski, 1993; Stainback et. al., 1990; Whinnery et. al., 1991). Co-researchers used a variety of these strategies to facilitate student learning. All used some form of peer tutoring. Group work was an essential aspect of all classroom learning. These groupings were advocated by the co-researchers as an effective management technique. Co-researchers considered peer tutoring a valuable tool in facilitating peer interaction and involvement.

The value of peer relationships and the modelling of appropriate student behaviour was demonstrated in all of the classrooms. This evidence concurs with that of the literature (Hamre-Nieutupski et al., 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). All co-researchers described social skill improvement by students with disabilities. Increased interactions, awareness of self, and improved self concept of students revealed this social skill development.

Adapting classroom instruction was not regarded as an overwhelming need by the co-researchers although it was a primary

concern in several research surveys (Rampaul & Freeze, 1991; Semmel, 1991). Although teachers expressed that they initially felt inadequate to adapt curriculum, they accessed a variety of supports that seemed to relieve their apprehensions.

Conflicting opinions were found in the literature regarding student improvement and progress in integrated settings. Few empirical studies supported the hypothesis that student skills improved within an integrated setting. However, some studies have discussed teacher views that students improved in social and academic skills within the regular classroom (eg., Hellier, 1988; Wang & Baker,1985). Co-researchers, through the use of daily logs and their own perception, cited improvement in their students' behaviour. In the area of cognitive development, students that had specific curriculum to follow demonstrated improvement in their skills.

A basis for a truly inclusive classroom is the belief by the teacher that all students can learn and belong in the regular classroom (Stainback et. al., 1990). Teachers have recognised that classrooms are diverse and that this diversity is an asset in the classroom. These findings coincided with the general feelings of the co-researchers, who discussed the value of students accepting individual differences and how students who had past experiences with students with disabilities were comfortable with those children. Students who had not had previous exposure to students with special needs were not as accepting of diversity.

Literature has indicated that teachers within the classroom need

additional supports such as support staff assistance, and training in specific techniques (Jenkins et al. , 1990; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989 ; Miller, 1990; Snell, 1991; Stainback & Stainback, 1984, 1990). Co-researchers accessed consultants for additional knowledge and skill development. Support staff was available to all of the co-researchers. Teacher assistants were considered by co-researchers to be an essential part of the educational team.

In schools where a special education or inclusive education teacher was in place, co-researchers described an open working relationship. The merger of special education and regular education as called for in the literature (Miller, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1987; Will, 1986) was occurring within these classrooms.

Co-researchers expressed strong positive feelings toward integration and toward their own experience. Contrary to some of the literature (Ammer, 1984; Savage & Wienke,1989; Whinnery et. al.,1991) co-researchers were not hesitant or ambivalent about the regular classroom being a positive placement for students with disabilities. One co-researcher did concur with the study by Brown et al., (1991), suggesting that the regular classroom was not always the optimal placement and that factors such as behaviour, skill needs, age appropriateness, and future needs had to be considered on an individual basis for each child. As recommended by York et al. (1992), co-researchers also indicated that teachers who are asked to integrate students should be given a choice.

This section has compared the data of this study to findings of the

literature. The majority of the findings of this study support the findings within the literature. The overall emphasis was that integration with supports can be positive for all persons involved. Implications for schools and teachers also emerge from the study's data. In the following section, these implications will be discussed.

Implications for Schools

This study has revealed that classroom teachers integrating students with moderate to severe disabilities have had positive experiences. Co-researchers have described a variety of possible reasons for positive outcomes. These reasons might give other schools suggestions that would enhance their efforts at integration. Co-researchers have detailed a strong support system. This system includes school administrative support, consultant support, teacher assistant support, parental support, and professional training support.

When special education and regular education teachers have worked together, the co-researchers expressed the value of a good team approach. This team approach seems to indicate that promotion of team work as well as using support personnel aid in the development of a positive school experience for all students.

Parental decision-making was advocated by co-researchers in some cases. Communication between parents and co-researchers was an integral aspect of each situation. However, co-researchers maintained their own professional ownership of the classroom instruction. Providing parents with an opportunity to work with teachers

and establishing parameters of this relationship seemed to be unique to each situation. Each teacher and parent needed to work through this relationship. At times, principal support was needed for problem solving.

Not all of the data were positive. There were some concerns expressed by the co-researchers. Some co-researchers expressed a dissatisfaction with the IEP format and failed to see its practical worth. Several co-researchers were frustrated by a seeming lack of information about school board policies. Open communication between teachers and school principals allowed teachers to voice their opinions. Study results suggest that consultant help with IEP planning provided teachers with tools for writing realistic goals.

Implications for Teachers

These co-researchers demonstrated that it was very possible to integrate students with moderate to severe disabilities into their classrooms. None of them denied that they had experienced some difficulties or claimed that everything was always perfect. However, all co-researchers felt that with a positive attitude and perseverance, teachers had the professional abilities to promote successful integration. Co-researchers advocated a strong position of parental rights to choose placement for their children. Cooperative learning, curricular adaptation, and consistent behaviour management strategies were used by all co-researchers. These strategies were important in the daily implementation of the classroom routine. They provided

teachers with a means to facilitate integration.

Diversity within the classroom was celebrated by each co-researcher. They encouraged an atmosphere of learning, that enabled each student to try to do his or her best. Students were encouraged to assist others and accept other students unconditionally. The importance of the teacher as the model of acceptance was demonstrated. As teachers actively promoted and planned for diversity, students followed through on this expectation.

Limitations of the Study

In qualitative research, the task of the researcher is to describe an experience within its natural setting. The researcher is not concerned with supporting a hypothesis but is more concerned with discovering as much as she or he can from the person or situation being investigated. Qualitative research allows for small sample sizes. It recognises that quantitative research methodologies are not always the best choice in descriptive research. Although the sample size in this study was small, practical constraints allow for this size.

Again, random choice of samples was not possible in this study. All of the co-researchers were volunteers and, therefore, extrapolations to the general teacher population are not recommended. Co-researchers were chosen because they volunteered. The difficulty of finding volunteers for the study may suggest that these teachers were not representative of the general teaching population. At the same time, other teachers may have been unwilling to participate in the

study, due to a stressful political climate and contract bargaining talks. It is not possible to conjecture about the variety of reasons for teachers to be unwilling to participate. Those co-researchers who did participate were more than willing and seemed to be forthright in their discussion.

The teacher sample was taken from one school board in one city within Canada. Teachers had easy access to provincial consultant support and inservice training opportunities. Results from the study could not be generalised to other settings where consulting and training support might be more difficult to obtain.

The researcher in the study was new to qualitative research. Questioning techniques generally improve with experience. The questioning involved within the interviews might possibly limit the study if the researcher did not delve into the interview with sufficiently clear probes.

The experiences of classroom teachers integrating students with moderate to severe disabilities have been discussed within this thesis and in this chapter have been compared with the literature. Conclusions and limitations to the study have also been discussed.

Teachers integrating students with moderate to severe disabilities their classrooms have detailed their experiences. They have provided a rich array of information along a variety of themes. The information provides additional information to that of current literature. Hopefully, some of the fears and apprehensions voiced by many classroom teachers about integration can be allayed through this study.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

I understand that the purpose of this study is to gather information from classroom teachers about their experiences integrating students with severe disabilities.

I understand that I will be interviewed for about 30 minutes. I understand that these interviews will be recorded on a cassette tape recorder. Tapes will be destroyed upon publication of the study.

I understand that a summary of the interview will be mailed to me to verify information given during the interview.

I understand that a subsequent telephone call will be made by the researcher to confirm the summary's accuracy. If there is a discrepancy in the summary, the researcher will set up a second interview to correct any misinterpretation.

I understand that all information will be kept confidential.

I understand that I can ask questions of the researcher and/or her thesis advisors at anytime. These people are:

Lil Janzen 464-1976 (res) 427-2764 (bus)
Dr. Lorraine Wilgosh (Thesis Co-Supervisor) 492-3738
Dr. Linda McDonald (Thesis Co-Supervisor) 492-2198
-on sabbatical leave until July, 1 1994

By signing this form, I agree to participate in the research study outlined above. I have been informed of the purpose and

understand the procedures involved in this study. I understand that I may withdraw from participation in this study at any time.

_____	_____
Signature of Participant	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Witness	Date